

# The lifespan of a typological form? *Los Corrales de Málaga, Spain*

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*Revised version received 14 December 2010*

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**Abstract.** *This paper identifies a distinctive form of multi-household dwelling that has been historically characteristic of the working-class districts of the large cities of Andalucía – namely corrales de vecinos. Most accounts of this typological form attribute its origin to the period of Islamic occupation of southern Spain but, using evidence from the city of Málaga, it is argued here that corrales have a variety of origins. The geographical distribution of this housing form is analysed and the factors accounting for its gradual demise are discussed. The paper concludes with an examination of the city of Málaga's recent attempt to conserve some of the few remaining structures of this type and the relationship of this policy to neighbourhood regeneration and the fulfilment of a particular type of housing need.*

*Key Words:* typological form, corrales, typological process, Málaga Spain, neighbourhood regeneration

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The study of specific residential building forms constitutes an important part of urban morphological investigation. Although subject to considerable debate (Kropf, 2006), the idea of a typological process has proved to be a fruitful approach to the analysis of building types and their evolution (Caniggia and Maffei, 2001; Corsini, 1997; Petruccioli, 2006). A fundamental premise of this approach is that modifications of forms existing in one period provide the basis for new forms created in the next (Gu *et al.*, 2008; Maffei and Whitehand, 2001). Thus, although there may be considerable mutation of structures there is an underlying historical continuity. Furthermore, in addition to providing a conceptual framework for the study of building change, it has been argued that the typological process approach can inform the management of change in the urban built environment (Samuels, 2008) and public

participation in the design process (Chen, 2010). Central to both the theoretical basis of this approach and its possible application in design and participation is the conviction that the built environment is much more than a set of 'incidental' phenomena. The built environment is also a means through which cultural and heritage transmission takes place from one generation to the next (Caniggia and Maffei, 2001) and, as such, is fundamentally related to issues of identity.

There are significant threats to such transmission however. The authenticity of a specific typological form is frequently severely compromised through its capture and re-use in the service of urban development promoted by multinational capitalism (Goode, 1992). In such circumstances the typology may be nothing more than a representation of the commodification of architecture in the interests of capital accumulation. Further-



**Figure 1. Corralon de Santa Sofia (author's photograph).**

more, in a situation where urban development is powerfully driven by capitalist acquisition, the duration of particular building types may be prematurely truncated in the interests of redevelopment for higher yielding monetary returns.

This paper is concerned with the lifespan of a particular building type in Andalucía, southern Spain that illustrates aspects of most of these themes. In an academic context, the study of various physical manifestations over the lifespan of this built form has a clear relevance for students of the typological process. But in the context of practical application, an example of the most recent phase of development of this built form demonstrates the mutually supportive relationship between a specific residential building type, community identity and positive conservation.

*Corrales de vecinos* or 'neighbourhood yards' are a morphologically distinctive, but increasingly rare type of multi-family housing form in Andalucía (Figures 1 and 2). They have an obvious similarity to other 'courtyard' types of dwelling (Edwards *et al.*, 2006) but with the distinction that they provide accommodation for several households within one confined space. This paper will examine the essential features of this typological form, predominantly in the context of the city of Málaga, then explore its origins and spatial pattern, and conclude by discussing some recent attempts at its conservation. As with

many other distinctive built forms, much of its initial appeal derives from its historicity but an appreciation of its true value requires an understanding of the 'role that these buildings play in the everyday lives of ordinary people' (Hubbard, 1993, p. 369). Ironically, the neglect of the latter – which played a significant role in the demise of *corrales de vecinos* – has recently shown some signs of reversal, and this recognition of the social as well as the historical value of these structures may offer the best prospect for their survival.

The dominant feature of the *corral* is a central open space closed at one end to form an elongated alleyway or patio. In the past, at the centre of the patio there was usually a water source, either a fountain or a well, to be used by all residents. This space would normally be surrounded by a gallery, most commonly on two or more levels, onto which small single-storey dwellings (often comprising no more than two rooms) opened (Montoto y Raustenstrauch, 1981; Morales Padrón, 1974). The total number of dwellings and residents varied from one *corral* to another, as did the size and shape of plots upon which they were built (compare Figures 1 and 3). Thus *corrales* varied substantially in area. Typically, the upper storey (or storeys) included a wooden veranda with wooden railings, usually decorated with plants and flowers (Figure 1). Each dwelling was known as a *sala* and normally housed no more than one family. Though families lived separately, they shared many communal services, such as lavatories, a washing area and sometimes cooking facilities, which were invariably located on the ground floor.

These *corrales* were a form of housing provision for the urban working and artisan classes (Morales Padrón, 1974). Historically, the common occupations were bricklaying, carpentry, blacksmithing, weaving, whitewashing, carting, washing, ironing, dress-making and cobbling. For many of these tradespeople the *corral* itself was the workplace and their customers were very often their neighbours. Most *corrales* would have a *casera* or caretaker (usually a woman) who was the representative of the owner of the



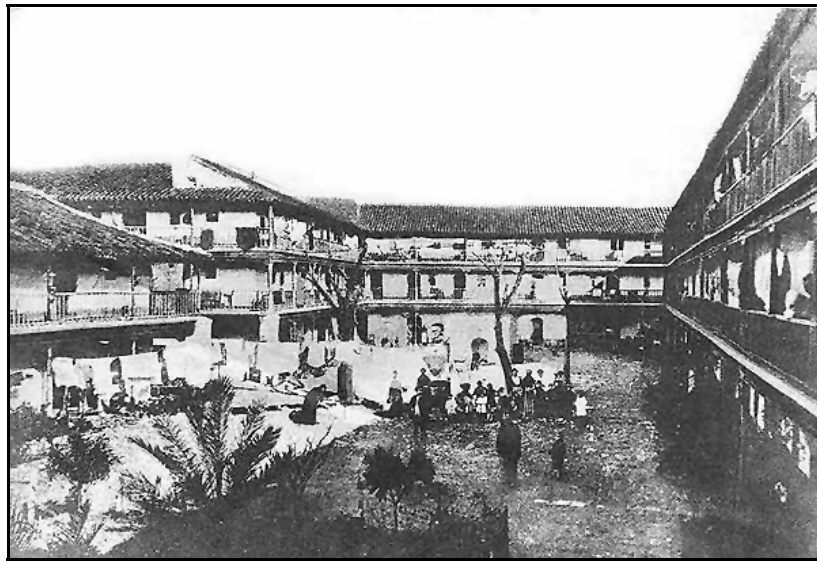
**Figure 2. Plan of Corralon de Santa Sofia. Adapted from Rubio Diaz, 1996, p. 95.**



**Figure 3. Corral de Dos Puertas, 6 Curadero, Málaga (author's photograph).**

property, would be responsible for the collection of rents, resolving disputes between neighbours, and ensuring that tasks related to

the maintenance and cleaning of communal areas were fairly allocated and performed (Morales Padrón, 1974; Torres Balbás, 1971). But the *corral* was essentially a democratic and communal residential form with the patio functioning as the geographical and socio-psychological focus for the community who lived there. It was not only the place of work for many but also the place where social and cultural activities took place, including baptisms, impromptu musical performances, and rituals associated with death. The gallery area immediately outside each doorway performed an intermediate function, transitional between the privacy of the house and the public space of the patio. Furniture, plants and work-related machinery could be located here by each family with a tacit understanding that a neighbour's space could not be violated (García Gómez, 2000). It has been claimed that the sense of place associated with living in a *corral* formed a unique compound of the intimacy of the individual dwelling and the communality of a small *barrio* (neighbourhood) (Morgado Giraldo, 1994), and several novels have celebrated this unique residential atmospheric mixture of the



**Figure 4. Corral del Conde, Seville. Reproduced from Javierre and Vázquez Medel (1979).**

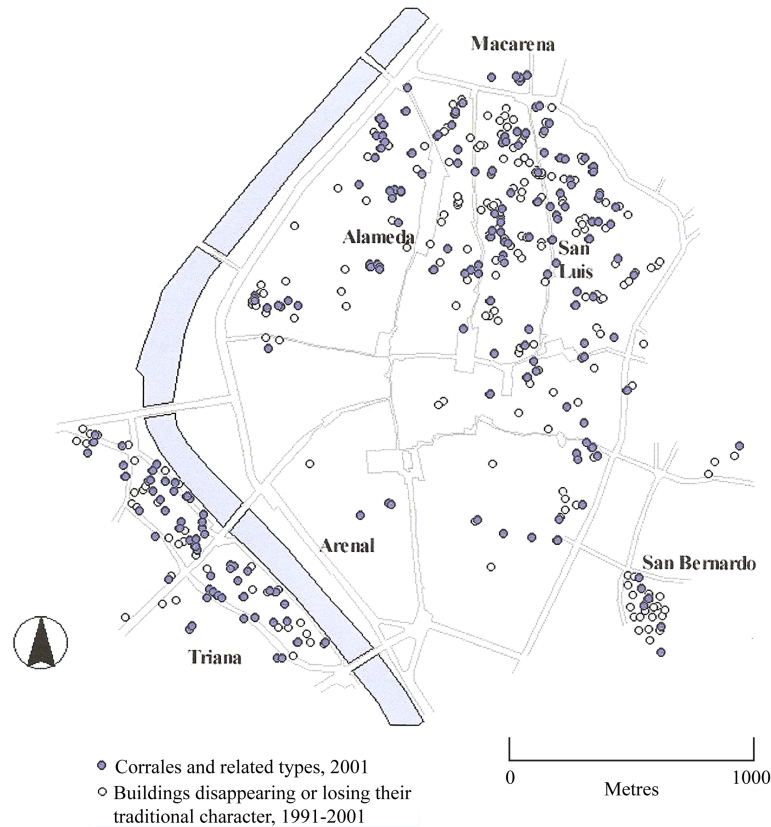


**Figure 5. Single storey corral, 12 Trinidad (author's photograph).**

private and the communal (Baroja, 1969; Reyes, 1901).

Although *corrales* are specifically associated with Andalucía, similar generic types of housing have been identified in northern Spain, specifically in rural León (*corrales de barro* – Ortiz Sanz, 2000), Barcelona (*pasillos* – Tatjer, 2003) and Bilbao (Martínez Martínez, 2005). Through the second half of the twentieth century many *corrales* disappeared but some still survive in the cities and towns of Andalucía, for example in Málaga, Seville, Córdoba, Granada, Huelva, Cádiz, San Fernando, Algeciras, Conil, Olivares, Punta Umbría and Arcos de la Frontera (Montoto y

Raustenstrauch, 1981; Morales Padrón, 1974). The strongest concentration of *corrales*, however, both historically and today, is in Seville. Figure 4 shows the largest such structure, the Corral del Conde with 113 dwellings housing over 600 people in 1947 (Dorado, 1975). In 1873, over 200 *corrales* were identified in the city of Seville (Gómez Zarzuela, 1873) but a century later this had declined to 81 (Morales Padrón, 1974). However, it is clear that both these studies refer to 'classical' large *corrales* of the type illustrated in Figures 1, 3 and 4, with galleries normally of at least two storeys around a patio and a private entrance to the whole unit. Carloni (1984) makes a distinction between *corrales*, *sensu stricto* and *casas de vecinos*, with the latter being defined as housing built in blocks but with small communal courtyards and generally fewer shared facilities. García Gómez (1997) further identified two types of *corral*, the first as just described, and a second, still with individual dwellings opening onto a communal patio or yard, but usually much smaller, sometimes of one storey and with one open entrance, in effect a 'blind alley' (Figure 5). A recent study of Seville (Salinas, 2003) included all types of structure in the categories just mentioned and claimed to identify a total



**Figure 6. Distribution of *casas de vecinos* in Seville, 2001 and *casas* that have disappeared or lost their character between 1991 and 2001. Adapted from Salinas, 2003.**

of 422 units in 1991 but this had fallen to 208 in 2001 (Figure 6). *Corrales* would therefore appear to be a generic typological form, albeit with several variations. They constitute a traditional type of multi-family working-class housing, found predominantly in the south of Spain, characterized by varying degrees of communal facilities or space arranged around a central patio, with several sub-categorizations.

### Origins

The origins and trajectory of development of *corrales* are disputed. Most accounts (Dorado, 1975; Morgado Giraldo, 1994; Torres Balbas, 1971), and especially more popular attributions, assert that their origin dates from the Muslim occupation of Spain, probably as far back as the fourteenth century or even earlier.

However, there is a clear objection to this categorization in that all authorities on Islamic urban structure stress the primacy of the individual household and its privacy (Eben Saleh, 1998). In morphological terms, such ideology led to a structural imperative that the domestic arrangement of dwellings had an internal configuration typically arranged around a central patio and sometimes with galleries above first-floor level. Crucially, Bianca (2000) has stressed ‘the concern of Islam with preserving the integrity of each dwelling unit’ (p. 54) and Hakim (1986) observes that ‘the courtyard house...creates the physical setting that allows...Islamic social and ethical requirements to be achieved. The layout ensures visual privacy from outside or adjacent areas, yet allows members of the household to be in contact with nature via the court; the plan also ensures a high standard of acoustic protection’ (p. 95). Such features are



**Figure 7. Posada Victoria, Málaga.  
Reproduced from Arguëlles, 1987.**

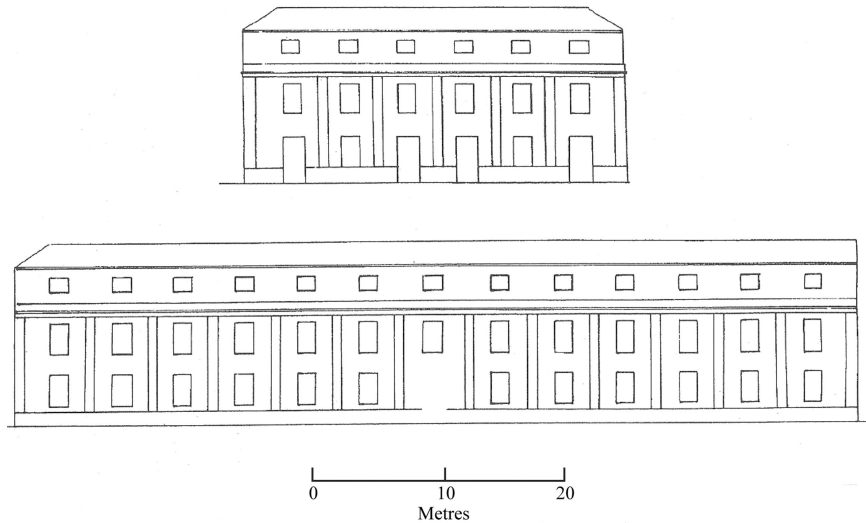
certainly not true of the typical *corral*. The presence of a central patio conforms to the structural characteristics of a *corral*, but the stress on the single household group as the sole occupants certainly does not. The assertion that *corrales* are therefore of fundamentally Islamic origin needs careful examination.

Though the 'normal' Islamic residential style is questionable as the origin of *corrales*, there are other urban architectural elements in the Islamic city that may have a closer relationship. Amongst these are the *kaysariyya* or, in Persian *caravanserai*, a series of buildings having covered galleries around an open courtyard (Hakim, 1986, p. 84), designed to accommodate either travelling merchants from other regions or male immigrant workers from distant towns or villages (Callens, 1955). A further component of relevance in this context is the *funduk* or *fondac*, denoting a hostelry where foreign (including non-Muslim) merchants and travellers would lodge. Such units would be planned around a courtyard where the ground floor was generally used to house animals and store merchandise and the upper floor would consist of small rooms opening onto a gallery overlooking the central courtyard (Hakim, 1986). It is but a short etymological step (Domingo Soriano, 1994-5) from the Arabic *fondac* to the Spanish *fonda*, denoting a lodging house. From the later-eighteenth century, the term *fonda* denoted a hotel in Spain, and the terms *posada* or *mesón* started to be used rather more for buildings catering for itinerant travellers. Almost all

surviving *posadas* or *mesones* have a distinctive physical structure (Figure 7) with an unmistakable resemblance to the description of a *funduk* or, indeed, a *corral*. It may be significant also that many of the type of trades described as being typical of the residents of the *corrales* are itinerant trades. In the historical context of the Islamic occupation of Spain, a plausible explanation for the origin of *corrales* is, therefore, that they catered initially for a very specific section of the urban population – travellers and itinerants who lacked a full accompanying household and were therefore outside the residential norms of the majority of the urban population; norms that were based on the household structure.

Although the alleged Islamic origins of *corrales* are frequently referred to, most authorities acknowledge that they grew in number in the post-Reconquest Era and that the major location for this growth was Seville (Montoto y Raustenstrauch, 1981; Morales Padrón, 1974), following the 'discovery' of the Americas in 1492. Seville was designated by the Crown as the sole exit and entry port for trade with the Americas in 1503 (Elliott, 1963; Parry, 1966). As a consequence the city's population grew from 25 000 to 65 000 in the first half of the sixteenth century and to 90 000 by 1600 (de Vries, 1984). The implication is that demand for additional accommodation led to a search for new ways of providing shelter for the masses. Interestingly, Montoto y Raustenstrauch (1981) has argued that many of the *corrales* in Seville were in fact conversions from monasteries, palaces, stately homes or corn exchanges, but Torres Balbas (1971, p. 385) takes issue with this view citing the references to *corrales* in Seville from 1203, 1314, 1411 and the 1500s. It is, of course, entirely feasible that both origins – a purpose built multi-occupied structure (possibly initially catering mainly for itinerant workers or tradespeople) and a conversion for multi-family occupancy of a building initially designed for a different purpose – could co-exist and, over time, come to be recognized by the generic term '*corral*'.

The growth of *corrales* in Málaga was



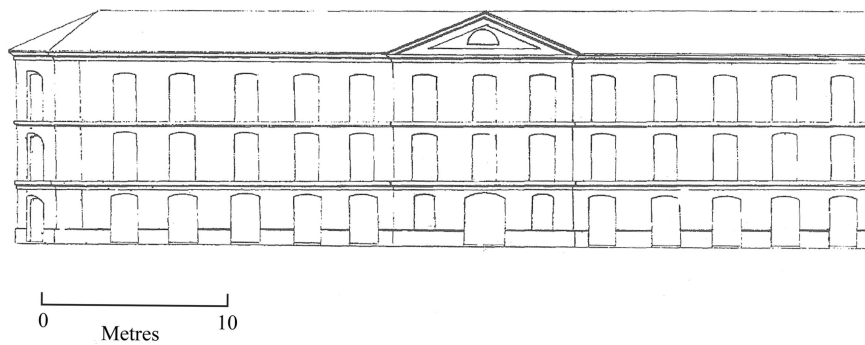
**Figure 8. *Corral* constructed for the Larios industrial dynasty, Málaga, 1858. Adapted from Rubio Díaz, 1996, p. 45.**

almost certainly later than that in Seville and may have been related to Seville's loss of its monopoly of the Atlantic trade. Certainly, Málaga's trade grew significantly in the eighteenth century with an estimated 1200 foreign merchants present in 1791 (Lacomba, 1973). Estimates of population suggest a growth from just over 19 000 in 1680 to over 49 000 in 1789 (Quintana Toret, 1986). In the later-eighteenth century some sixteen *corrales de vecinos* were identified in Málaga from the *Catastro de Ensenada* of 1750 (Reina Mendoza, 1986), and this authority argues that most of these were located in zones of recent growth and therefore were unlikely to either have had their origins as conversions from large single household dwellings or other uses or be survivals from the period of Islamic dominance of the city. In other words, they were 'new' purpose-built structures of the eighteenth century rather than being some type of 'inherited' form. It is quite likely therefore that this generation of *corrales* reflected a typological process, producing differentiation within this specific building type but within an overall framework of continuity. It would appear, however, that most of these eighteenth century *corrales* have not survived, as a survey published in 1997 (García Gómez, 1997) identified over 50 *corrales* within the city of Málaga but only four of these were dated as

earlier than the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In the mid-nineteenth century there was considerable economic expansion in Málaga and a significant phase of industrialization (Lacomba, 1972; Nadal, 1972), accompanied by another spurt in population growth, from the nearly 50 000 at the end of the eighteenth century to 130 000 in 1900. This growth produced the usual contemporary urban problems of overcrowding, sanitation and hygiene and concern over the urban environmental conditions of the working classes (Martínez Montes, 1852). There is evidence of attempts to ameliorate these conditions through the provision of housing by some of the leading manufacturers in the industrializing western *barrios* of the city. In another variation on the building type, these included a *corralon* constructed for the Larios family in 1858 (Figure 8) next to their large textile factory *Industria Malagueña* built in 1843 in the *barrio* of Huelin (Rubio Díaz, 1996). In 1876 the architect Federico Pérez was employed by the wine producing and exporting firm Scholtz Hermanos to design a *corralon* for a greenfield site, on the Huerto del Obispo. In 1872, during the period of *desamortización*, land acquired after the confiscation and sale of the Carmelite convent of San Andrés was used to build a huge three-





**Figure 9. Corral constructed in Plaza Toros Vieja, Málaga, 1872.**  
Adapted from Archivo Municipal, Málaga, 1872, Legajos: 1233/27.

storey *corral* in the Plaza de Toros Vieja (Figure 9) (García Gómez, 2000). Philanthropic motives may have played some part in these developments but the physical layout and management of *corrales* was such as to facilitate the careful selection and supervision of occupants who could also be employees of the owner.

Most of the *corrales* identified by García Gómez (2000) were built as such *de novo*: their design from the start was that of multi-family occupancy with some sharing of facilities. However, it has also been suggested (Rubio Diaz, 1996) that a *corral* type structure could also evolve from the sequential occupation of a plot, not dissimilar to the process of burgrave repletion (Conzen, 1960). Figure 10 indicates this process and it is clear that, in this case, the patio as the central, organizing feature, emerges almost by default – it is simply the space left over when the majority of the plot has been built upon. This process could account for the variety of *corral* forms that have been identified, some of which are indicated in Figure 11.

It is clear that a substantial variety of forms of *corral* have existed and that part of this variety may be due to the origins of this particular typological form in several historical periods. However, this variety in itself raises the question of whether or not the *corral* is a generic type or not. It is argued here that it is indeed a generic type but a type with a substantial variety of spatial expressions – expressions that illustrate the validity of the concept of a typological process or the

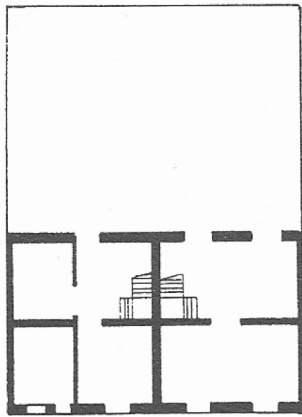
progressive modification and adaptation of a particular built form.

### Numbers and distribution

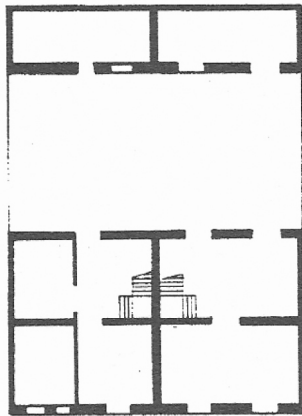
The *Catastro de Ensenada* of 1750 identifies only sixteen *corrales* in Málaga at this time but their distribution is significant (Figure 12). The majority were located in the extramural zones of the medieval city (Reina Mendoza, 1986). Sagrario, the most central parish and by far the wealthiest and most prestigious part of the city, had no *corrales* identified (García Gómez, 2000). The largest number of *corrales* was in Santos Mártires parish, in the north-east of the city which included the mainly working-class suburbs of Capuchinos and Trinidad, the latter area being located on the western bank of the River Guadalmedina. Of the ten *corrales* in this parish, only three were located within the former walls, but all were very close to the intramural fringe, for example next to the Puerta de Antequera, one of the principal gates to the city (a traditional location for *fondacs* and *mesones*) (Heredia Flores, 2000). In Santiago parish, to the north-east of the historical core, there were four *corrales* and in San Juan, to the south west, two *corrales* were located in the Perchel *barrio*.

There was significant growth in the number of *corrales* in Málaga in the nineteenth century (Figure 12). It is possible to date around 80 *corrales* identified by García Gómez (1997, 2000), and to these a small number of additional identifications by Rubio Diaz

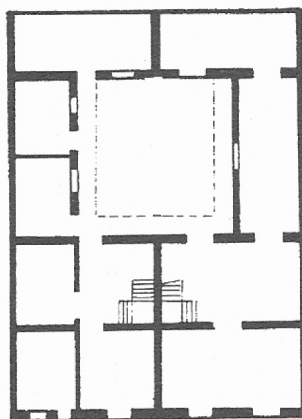




Stage 1: Initial construction of two blocks of houses on 50% of plot. Stairway gives access to separate dwellings on upper floor.



Stage 2: Construction of third block of houses at the rear of the plot.



Stage 3: further blocks constructed around perimeter of the plot, leaving central patio as communal space.

**Figure 10. Possible *corral* evolution.**  
Adapted from Rubio Diaz, 1996, p. 101.

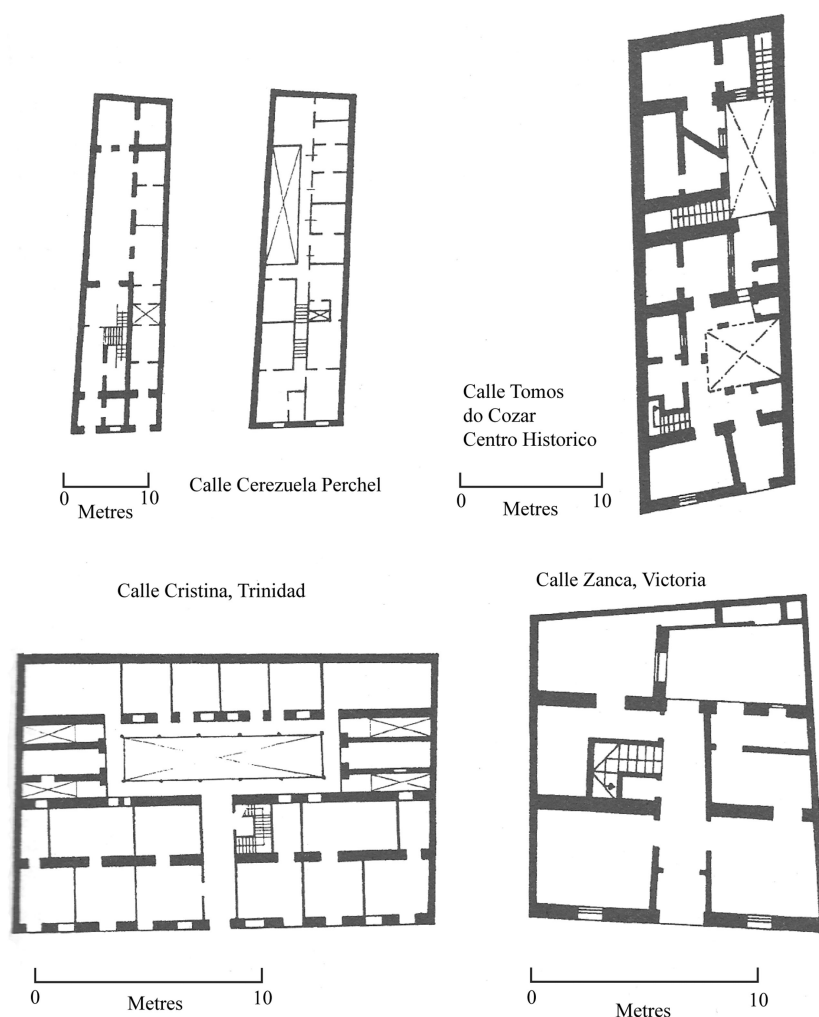
**Table 1. Date of building of *corrales*, 1840-99**

Date	Number of <i>corrales</i>
1840-49	4
1850-59	15
1860-69	14
1870-79	11
1880-89	22
1890-99	11
Total	77

Sources: García Gómez, 1997; Rubio Diaz, 1996. The data used here relate to *corrales* whose origin it is possible to date. There are at least 30 *corrales* known to have been built in the nineteenth century but whose precise date of origin is uncertain.

(1996) can be added. There are at least another 30 identified but with no date: it is likely that many of these were built during the nineteenth century. It is clear from Table 1 that the growth was fairly continuous, developing strongly in the 1850s and 1860s, with a late spurt in the 1880s. It is likely that the latter owed much to the population influx into the city consequent on the phylloxera epidemic of the 1870s (Barke, 1997) and the subsequent depopulation of the city's rural hinterland and pressure of population on available urban accommodation.

It is probable that the vast majority of *corrales* existing in 1900 (Figure 12) were a product of the nineteenth century and the pressure to accommodate either workers or hopeful immigrants to the city. In the words of García Gómez (2000, p. 957) *corrales* became the '*vivienda obrera por excelencia del XIX*' (most typical workers' housing of the nineteenth century). The distribution on or beyond the periphery of the *casco histórico* is highly significant and, when compared to that in 1750, suggests that a substantial proportion of the population growth of nineteenth century Málaga was accommodated in this form of housing. Perchel and Huelin to the south-west

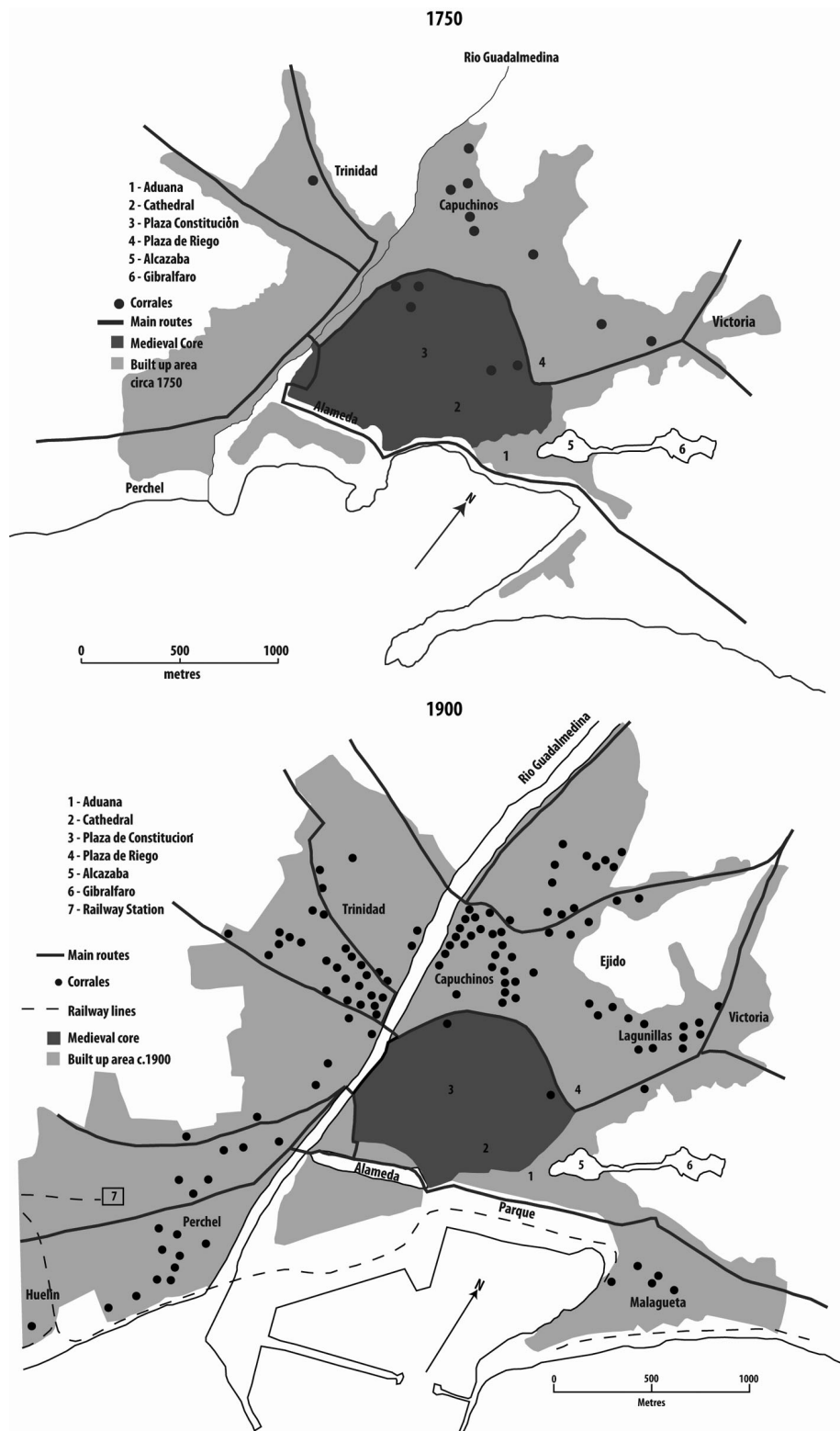


**Figure 11. Some *corral* forms. Adapted from Rubio Diaz, 1996, p. 103.**

of the River Guadalmedia were the main 'industrial' residential neighbourhoods and, although a significant number of *corrales* were located within these areas, many of them were substantial in size (Figures 8 and 9). Trinidad *barrio* to the north-west had a rather denser concentration but a less 'industrial' character, working in agriculture in the rural-urban periphery being a significant source of employment (García Gómez, 2000). A still denser concentration of rather smaller *corrales* occurred in the Goleta and Capuchinos neighbourhoods, immediately north of the historical core: in terms of employment, this area was characterized much more by traditional small-craft and street-enterprise

activities. The Victoria *barrio* to the north-west had a mostly middle-class structure with a lower density of *corrales*, but several *corrales* were located adjacent to the pottery and brick making district of El Ejido, an area also characterized by several cave dwellings (Arguëlles, 1987). Finally, a small number were located in the Malagueta area to the south-east, a zone which, at this time, had a semi-industrial character.

This distribution is confirmed by an incomplete source for 1903, the *Catastro Sanitario de Establecimientos Públicos* (Nadal, 1987), a detailed survey of public health issues in the city. The city was divided into ten districts for the purpose of the survey



**Figure 12. Corrales in Málaga, in 1750 and c. 1900. Compiled from data in Reina Mendoza (1986) and García Gómez (2000).**



**Figure 13. Exterior of *corral*, 27-29 Avenida de Rosaleda, Málaga, before redevelopment. Reproduced from García Gómez, 1997, p. 194.**

but unfortunately the data for three of these have been lost. These include the Perchel, Capuchinos and Victoria areas which, as we have seen, had a considerable density of *corrales* in the nineteenth century, especially the first two. No *corrales* were recorded in three further districts that effectively encompassed the historical core of the city. In the remaining six districts 67 *corrales* were enumerated, with Trinidad being the leading district with 28. In the course of the nineteenth century well over 50 *corrales* had been developed in the three districts of Perchel, Capuchinos and Victoria, so it is a reasonable assumption that by 1903 something like 120 *corrales* existed within the city and that the majority were located within the working-class suburbs that had developed in the course of the nineteenth century.

By the later-twentieth century, however, the number had declined drastically with only around 50 being identified towards the end of the century (García Gómez, 1997). Table 2



**Figure 14. Redevelopment on site of three former *corrales*, Avenida de Rosaleda, Málaga (author's photograph).**

**Table 2. Condition of *corrales* in 1997 and 2009**

Condition	1997	2009
In ruins	7	7
Poor condition	8	-
Acceptable condition	24	5
Rehabilitated	3	6
Uninhabited	9	2
Redeveloped plot	-	15
Empty plot	-	16
Total	51	51

Sources: García Gómez (1997); author's field survey, 2009.

shows the state of repair of these *corrales* in 1997 and summarizes their subsequent fate. It is clear that very few traditional *corrales* still exist in Málaga.

Almost two-thirds of the *corrales* that existed in 1997 (a number already reduced to about one-third of what it was at the beginning of the twentieth century) have disappeared through demolition and redevelopment (Figures 13 and 14) or have simply been demolished (Figure 15). A further seven are in ruins and may be expected to follow the same course (Figure 16). A variety of processes explain this rapid demise. Although a semi-private, semi-communal life style remains



**Figure 15. Site of former *corral*, 12 Trinidad (author's photograph).**

more acceptable in Spain than in many other developed countries, especially in working-class areas, it is undeniable that many contemporary social trends are in the opposite direction (Hooper, 2006). A more private lifestyle for both families and individuals has characterized recent years. For some groups, therefore, the traditional *corral* with its ambiguous mixture of public and private space has ceased to have its former attraction. There is no doubt, however, that many have been lost through the slum clearance process, as the urban authorities have deemed either the sharing of, or the conspicuous lack of, facilities to be unacceptable. Indeed, debate about the high density and hygiene problems associated with some *corrales* started as early as 1869 with the publication of a planned suburban extension (*ensanche*) to the west of the city by the architect Juan Nepomuceno de Avila (Archivo Historico Municipal, 1869). In the *memoria* accompanying this plan, Avila launched a critical attack on *corrales* and what he perceived as their moral and physical health problems. He argued strongly for the promotion of single-family dwellings for working people. The 1903 public health survey also noted that hygienic conditions in most *corrales* was poor (Nadal, 1987). In recent decades, demand has also been reduced somewhat through factors encouraging the depopulation of the inner city but, more recently, probably more important has been the process of gentrification. In some cases this



**Figure 16. Partially demolished *corral* at 32 Carrera de Capuchinos, Málaga (author's photograph).**

has led to property owners seeking a significant revalorization of their asset through demolition and redevelopment (Figure 14) or, in others, significant upgrading which has fundamentally altered the character of the *corrales* and their resident population (Salinas, 2003). Possibly the best example of this is the Corral del Conde in Seville where much of the accommodation is now in the form of luxury tourist apartments. All these factors could be interpreted as evidence that this particular building type has reached the end of its lifespan; that the typological process in relation to this specific building form has reached a conclusion.

### **Resurrection?**

Although it is clear that the vast majority of *corrales* have disappeared, their total extinction may not necessarily be inevitable. Some surviving *corrales* have been gentrified and, although superficially their physical structural characteristics may have been

retained, most have changed their fundamental character in this process. But there may be an alternative to the most common fate of either demolition and redevelopment or gentrification. There is evidence that some urban local authorities have become increasingly interested in supporting the many positive features which the communal way of life in the *corrales* has to offer. This may indicate a further phase in the typological sequence of change and adaptation, where structural adjustment and modification is consciously linked to specific social goals. Indeed, physical regeneration has been also associated with a commitment to retaining and fostering what is considered to be a worthwhile social model, one which could also be adapted for solving contemporary social problems, with particular relevance to the 'Third Age'.

An example of this kind of intervention is the acquisition by the *Ayuntamiento* (City Hall) of Málaga of the Corralón de Santa Sofía in Calle Montes de Oca in the Trinidad district of the city (Figure 1). This deteriorating complex of 50 dwellings was renovated by the *Ayuntamiento* through its Instituto Municipal de Vivienda (Municipal Housing Institute). What is particularly interesting about this development is that, for many years, conservation policy in Spain was dominated by its concern for 'monumental' structures only: preservation policies were relatively weak and funds limited (Ford, 1985). Vilagrasa (1998) has noted how this partially stemmed from the loss of many historical buildings in the period of *desamortización* (the confiscation and sale of church and municipal land and property) and, subsequently, the demolition of city walls (Ganau, 1997). As with much of the rest of Europe (Zanchetti and Jokilehto, 1997), the emphasis was on surviving 'monuments', usually single buildings, rather than on urban areas generally, and resources were used for recording and cataloguing rather than for rehabilitation (Orbaşlı, 2000). However, there are indications of significant change and a broadening of perspective in the Spanish approach to heritage and its conservation.

This was signalled, for example, by the declaration of *conjuntos histórico-artístico* (broadly similar to conservation areas in Britain) and the emergence of what has been termed *la cultura de la recuperación urbana* (Martínez, 2001). Some notable successes in the rehabilitation and recovery of historic centres have been recorded (Pol, 1989). The development of a large range of administrative and legal instruments at different scales (Pol, 1998) and the recognition of important functional changes in the role of city centres (Calle Vaquero and García Hernandez, 1998) have provided important stimuli, but changes in approach, for example in the recognition of 'character areas' or morphological regions within cities (Barke, 2003), have also underscored the significance of a comprehensive approach.

The Corralón de Santa Sofía is arguably a small-scale indicator of such change. It implies that it may no longer automatically be the case that 'vernacular architecture can survive only when it is economically viable' (Ford, 1985, p. 266) – or, at least, signals a wider interpretation of economic viability. After the completion of the rehabilitation, the *Corralón* was made available to 80 rent-paying senior citizens who now benefit from modernized facilities in homes which, albeit small, include lounge, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. The original intention was to maintain as far as possible the traditional construction of *corrales*: to modernize but to provide common areas for all residents, including kitchens, dining rooms and washrooms. However, as a result of a public consultation exercise a greater degree of independence for each tenant was requested, but along with the provision of support services (for example, meals, cleaning and hygiene) for the more frail and needy residents via a network of social workers. The typical profile of the residents is a widowed female of about 70 years of age, on a low income and with restricted mobility (though access is certainly not limited to females). The monthly rent is 22 euros plus a charge for electricity. Most importantly, the fact that residents live 'independently' in their own homes and that

the traditional communal areas have not been reinstated does not mean that the old way of life has disappeared altogether. The *Ayuntamiento*'s involvement did not just stop with the modernization of the physical infrastructure. A programme of activities is supported both within the *corral* and externally. The *Corralón* has a gym and a variety of excursions are held each year. Virtually all the residents participate in these activities and particularly popular are the *in situ* ceramic classes and painting lessons. Opportunities exist to sell the products of these activities. A doctor visits each week and there are two cleaning women for the common areas.

The most significant aspect of external activities is the annual week-long *Semana Popular* (People's Week) which takes place in late May or early June, in which not only residents from other *corrales* in the area but also any other *malagueños* and interested tourists are invited to participate (Sur, 2010). In 2010 the *Ayuntamiento* sponsored the sixth event in the series entitled *Semana Popular de los Corralones Trinidad Perchel*. This is part of a wider scheme known as the *Proyecto de Desarrollo Comunitario* (Community Development Plan) for south Trinidad and north Perchel, promoted by the City Hall's Centre for Social Services (Centre District). Over the 4 years of its existence, this initiative has sought to add cultural to architectural regeneration. While sheer enjoyment is obviously a vital aim of this event, the *Semana Popular* also has significant social and educational aims. An important element in the *Semana Popular*, designed to encourage maximum participation by the residents, is the various *concursos* (competitions). The major one is the *Concurso de Engalanamiento* (Embellishment Competition) for streets, patios and balconies, which in the course of the week are festooned with flowers, plants and other decorative features (Figure 17). Participation has been widened to include non-traditional *corrales*: for example, modern apartment developments built around a patio area. In 2008 over 50 patios were involved in this competition and the total number of



**Figure 17. Interior of corral 'Los Montes', Málaga (author's photograph).**

participants was 2600. Among other competitions organized are photography, traditional cooking, music and flamenco dancing. Various types of standing exhibitions are also staged, including, for example, old photographs and plans of the *corrales* as they once were. Another feature of the celebrations is the various workshops (*talleres*) organized to give participants hands-on experience in various fields, such as traditional games, mural painting and making puppets. A number of these are specifically geared to children, including the very youngest. Guided walking tours (*paseos guiados*), aimed especially at schoolchildren and interested groups outside Trinidad-Perchel, also play an important part in the week's programme. Simultaneously with these activities in the *corrales* themselves, educational talks, centred on various aspects of traditional life in these distinctive urban environments, are given in local schools (Málaga Hoy, 2009).

Although the *Semana Popular* is the most important event, it is not the only initiative of this kind organized during the year by the *Ayuntamiento*. For example, at Christmas the same protagonists participate, albeit on a rather smaller scale, in another week of activities entitled '*Navidad en los corralones*' (Sur, 2008). The decoration of *corrales*, patios and streets – including the creation of traditional Christmas *belenes* (cribs/nativity scenes) – is a vital element in this celebration. To encourage participation *concursos* are



organized, as well as a range of both passive and active cultural events. As with the *Semana Popular* a major aim is to bring old traditions and modes of living back to life in a modern setting.

## Conclusion

This study has several implications for typological research and its relationship to urban morphology. In describing the typological process it is common to use a biological analogy, with the implication that change is evolutionary and occurs 'naturally'. But change and adaptation may occur through conscious policy intervention. In such circumstances the biological analogy may be less appropriate. The concept of typological process remains relevant so long as it is allowed to encompass conscious policy intervention as part of that process. We should be wary of an interpretation that implies that the typological process is concerned only with 'natural' evolution and change in the type. Furthermore, it is necessary to caution against a too mechanistic interpretation of type and the temptation to draw conclusions from form alone. This study has demonstrated that similar structures (similar enough to constitute a type) have had rather different origins. A similarity of form does not, in itself, constitute proof of a uniform trajectory of development. Similar forms could evolve from rather different origins. A careful historical reconstruction of such trajectories is therefore an essential requirement for a full understanding of any particular building type.

Although several variations in the basic structure existed and different origins may be identified, it is argued here that *corrales* are a generic typological form. As with other types of courtyard housing (Edwards *et al.*, 2006), they derive unity from a shared basic layout but also constitute a physical form that reflects a desire to achieve economy in social and hygiene provision combined with an acceptable level of occupation density and therefore rental yield. As a built form they are clearly embedded within historical and social

contexts within the city and, as such, they form a distinctive component of the townscape in both a visual and cultural heritage sense. Particular building types can have a clear relationship to identity in that they constitute a specific form of cultural expression. This is certainly true of *corrales* and their relationship to working-class culture in the cities of southern Spain. The built environment provides a material tangible anchor and an important focus for a community. Communities are likely to have a greater stake, and a greater sense of pride, in an area if its physical surroundings represent more than shelter. Surroundings that are expressive of a continuity of heritage possess exactly this characteristic.

It is clear that, as a typological form, *corrales* in Málaga, and indeed in other Spanish cities, could not be fossilized in their original form and function. The vast majority have disappeared and the future survival of extant examples is highly problematic due to their small size, lack of basic facilities and unpopular locations. These factors betray the predominant origin of this distinctive multi-household dwelling type as a high-density solution to rapid population growth. It could be concluded, therefore, that the lifespan of this building type has run its course. Yet their total extinction is by no means inevitable, nor is it the case that their only alternative future is as some sort of gentrified 'museum' exhibit.

This paper has addressed an important topic of contemporary discourse on cities, namely the fate of non-monumental, yet culturally valued, residential buildings that have ceased to provide acceptable functional housing requirements. A policy of active conservation as exemplified by the Málaga *Ayuntamiento's* treatment of the *Corralon de Santa Sofia* has surely got much to commend it, based as it is on a recognition of cultural values within a frequently marginalized segment of society. Goode's (1992) accusation that typological theory and practice has been usurped by developers and corporations and used as an instrument for the promotion of *ersatz* versions of building types with a consequent loss of authenticity is not sustained by this case study.

No such concerns need be entertained when the adaptation and subsequent use of the 'type' is firmly grounded in a clear understanding of a community's cultural foundations. Málaga's policy has rescued and regenerated a unique type of urban artefact, used it as a focus to revitalize a declining urban neighbourhood, sought to celebrate and retain a traditional way of life (albeit in a modified form more suited to contemporary society), and responded to an obvious social need, particularly among its senior citizens. There is a model here that other cities could follow.

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the editor and two anonymous referees for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jon Swords, Northumbria University, for his assistance with the illustrations.

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